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Ser 461

APR 17 1958

AIR MAIL

From: Commanding Officer, Fleet Tactical Support Squadron TWO

To: Chief of Information

Via: (1) Commander Fleet Air Alameda

(2) Commander Naval Air Force, Pacific

Subj: Approval and forwarding of information to Mr. Glenn Infield, Freelance writer; request for

Ref: (a) U. S. Navy Public Information Manual

Encl: (1) Copy of Mr. Glenn Infield's ltr to LT H. C. RAGSDALE dtd 1 Apr 58
(2) LCDR H. C. RAGSDALE's ltr to Mr. Glenn Infield, dtd 14 April 1958

1. Enclosure (2) is a proposed answer to the questions asked by Mr. Infield in enclosure (1). Because of the past interest in the R3Y program, it is requested that the Chief of Information review enclosure (2) and, if approved, forward this reply direct to Mr. Infield.

W. L. BROYLES

3507 4th Avenue
Beaver Falls, Pa.
April 1, 1958

Lt. Homer C. Ragsdale
Fleet Tactical Support Sq. (VR-2)
U.S. Naval Air Station
Alameda, California

Dear Lt. Ragsdale;

As you can tell by reading the enclosed letter I am interested in writing an article about the experience you and your crew and passengers had on January 24 in your R3-Y Tradewind plane. I am a free lance writer specializing in aviation articles. My stories appear in such magazines as Cavalier, Flying, Popular Mechanics, Saga, Playboy, Stag, Kale, Man's Life, etc. Now, this month and next I have stories appearing on Paul Mantz, the movie flyer; The AF Shark(Popular Mech.); the recent MATS plane that threw a prop on the same run you were making across the Pacific; and a story on Air Racing.

There are no sources of facts that I need for such a story on your experience except you. I wondered if you would help? What I would like, of course, is the telling of the flight in your own words from take-off to landing. However, this is asking quite a bit so I am including a list of questions which if I have the answers for, I have the basis of the story. I am a pilot, Major, AFRes, so I am familiar to a certain point with the problem you faced. I know very little about the R3-Y, though, so if some of the questions appear silly, excuse my stupidity.

I would like to know such things as : (Naturally, if classified, ignore.)

Time you left Honolulu? Date?

What happened to make you throw a prop? Prop runaway?
Couldn't feather? Any warning that prop was going to
let go? Both go at once? Both hit fuselage?

Hit near any individual?

Did plane lose all pressurization? Did slipstream help
seal hole?

Did you lose control of plane momentarily or was it the
shock of losing pressurization that caused you to drop
6000 feet?

ENCLOSURE (//)

Details of landing? Was plane hard to handle on three engines? Problems encountered in crash landing? Was crew and passengers in emergency stations? Did you think you might have to ditch or bail out before landing?

Time of landing?

Some background on your flying career? Hours? Other types of planes? Combat? Experiences at other times, etc.

By this time I imagine you think I am pretty nosy. However, it is facts like these that make a story authentic and that is the only type of story I want to write. There are many more details you could add if you find time or desire, I'm sure. I am only covered the bare essentials. I will leave that to you.

I will keep you posted on the progress of the article. Thanks a million for any help you can give me on this matter.

Best regards.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Glenn Infield
Glenn Infield

14 April 1958

Mr. Glenn Infield
3507 4th Avenue
Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania

Dear Mr. Infield:

Your letter of April 1, 1958, has been received and I regret this delay in answering. I have just returned from leave; your letter was addressed to me in care of VR-2, therefore it was late being delivered.

I am happy to give you all the information I can on the R3Y propeller incident. I want to mention that other inquiries have been received for information such as you desire. Also, a Naval Officer friend of mine, and myself, are presently preparing an article about the flight. We can only work on it during our off time, so it's a slow process. Too, regulations require that information like I am going to give you be available to any one else who might ask for it. Of course, I must clear this letter with my Commanding Officer, but I will attempt to minimize any further delays.

Now to answer your questions and an attempt to give you the information you desire.

The "Indian Ocean Tradewind", an R3Y-1, departed Keeshi Lagoon, Honolulu, Hawaii, at 0056 (Honolulu time), 24 January 1958, destination, Naval Air Station, Alameda, California, on board was 16,000 lbs of cargo. Estimated flight time enroute was 6 hours and 21 minutes. I was the assigned Transport Plane Commander for the flight. CDR E. B. Binkley, USN, VR-2's Alameda - Honolulu - Alameda Route Check Pilot, was assigned to the flight to administer a route check flight to me, also, he was assigned as the First Pilot of the flight. Transport pilots are route checked periodically to assure that certain qualifications are current. Also aboard was our Squadron Commander, Captain H. L. Broyles, USN, who was returning to Alameda after an inspection of our Keeshi Lagoon facilities.

At the time the propeller was lost, we were cruising at 21,000 feet, pressure altitude, the time was approximately 0520 (Honolulu time), this being about 15 minutes before sunrise twilight time at our position and altitude. The propeller came off with an explosive sound without warning and tore a large hole in the fuselage. Following the explosive sound was the explosive decompression and black-out. Power on the operating engines was reduced to facilitate flight control. With the power retarded to near flight idle we commenced to descend about 500 feet per minute to 16,000 ft. By this time, twilight was with us and a horizon was visible.

The radio operator broadcasted our distress message as soon as we got a transmitter back into operation. No personnel aboard were injured. Our

ENCLOSURE (2)

next step was to survey the damage. We sustained damage to the fuselage, electrical systems and flight control systems. Our primary flight instruments were inoperative. We now felt that continued flight to Alameda was probable, though even with flight control difficulties. The San Francisco Bay area weather was poor, low ceilings and rain that was accompanied by south easterly winds over 20 knots. Flight was continued at 16,000 feet to the Farrallon Island radio beacon on top of all clouds. We found a break in the clouds over the bay. A descent was made in accordance with visual flight rules. On touch down numbers one and four engine propellers were positioned in the reverse thrust position to shorten the landing, however, due to the inflight damage, the number one propeller did not reverse, this caused the aircraft to swerve sharply to the right and towards the sea wall. All crew members were at their ditching station. Power was applied to the number four engine to straighten the aircraft's path down the lagoon and away from the rocks. All engines across the board were then shut down. Number one was still running due to inflight damage to its controls. The ship pulled to the right sharply, we attempted to pull the nose over the rocks, it just cleared, the hull contacted the break water just forward of the pilots compartment. All crew members exited the aircraft without any injuries.

Our enroute time (even though slowed down for the last 475 miles) was five hours and fifty four minutes from the take off at Keehi Lagoon, Honolulu to San Francisco. The "Indian Ocean" had beaten the record time for any transport aircraft between Honolulu and San Francisco, this includes all military or commercial prop driven aircraft. I do not know what caused the propeller to leave the aircraft. The investigation is still in process.

As for my flying career, I will be very brief. I entered flight training as a Naval Aviation Cadet in 1942, designated a Naval Aviator February 1944. Saw combat duty in a Seventh Fleet "Black Cat" Squadron, south west Pacific, during World War II. Have flown a total of 4,300 pilot hours in multi-engine aircraft, this being in such aircraft as the PBH, PBM, P2V, R4D, TF, and of course the R3V.

I hope this information will be of some help to you.

Sincerely yours,

Homer C. Ragsdale
Lieutenant Commander, USN

Fleet Tactical Support Squadron TWO
U. S. Naval Air Station
Alameda, California